

the villein's services more largely than ever after the Black Death, and often for a rent by no means equivalent.¹

Whatever the labourer and the serf gained as the result of the plague, was so much loss to the landlord. He suffered terribly during the break up of the old feudal agriculture, however advantageous the change was destined to prove to him in the long run. Whatever sacrifices he made to retain hands for the demesne, however highly he paid free labour, however frequently he commuted villein-services, it was impossible to work all the old land with half the old population. Chronic recurrence of the plague kept down the numbers. It became necessary to abandon the attempt to cultivate the whole demesne. Part was let out to villeins or labourers, who would accept it only as free farmers, and not on the old terms of villein tenure.² Part was converted into pasturage. English fleeces were driving all other wool out of the Flemish market, while our cloth manufacture at home was beginning to create serious jealousy among the weavers of Ghent and Bruges. The landlord found that a few shepherds could render a large part of his demesne land profitable, which otherwise would have lain fallow for want of hands.³ The same plan may have occurred to the growing class of farmers who were taking over other parts of the land thrown upon the market in large quantities ; but they have left no manor-rolls to reveal the policy adopted. Though these expedients might temper a little the wind of adversity and lay the foundations of a better agricultural system for the distant future, the landlord had for the present fallen from his old standard of prosperity. His demesne-farming was on a smaller scale—in many cases only half the old land was under the plough⁴—he was paying double prices for labour, and at the same time the villeins were compelling him to commute their services. The landlord's grievances fully account for the dogged persistence of Parliament in regard to the Statute of Labourers. Neither is it surprising to find

¹ T. W. Page, 32, 35-8 ; Ashley, i. 2, p. 265 ; Knighton, ii. 65 ; Cambridge

Manor.

¹ See Ap.

* T. W. Page, 30-1.

* T. W. Page, 40, lines 4-7. •